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ANCIENT MOUNDS AND ENCLOSURES IN INDIANA.

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[A paper prepared for the seminar in local history in Butler College.]

THE largest group of mounds and enclosures in the region of the Great Lakes, the Mississippi valley and the Gulf coast seems to have been along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, and especially near their convergence. Judge N. R. Overman says (*Prehistoric and Indian History of Howard and Tipton Counties, Indiana*, p. 5): "It is probable that at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, two widely converging lines, the Mound Builders met in solemn council to give laws, adjust and determine difficulties between settlements and states. More than twelve hundred enclosures and ten thousand mounds have been counted in Ohio. Indiana, too, is but little less fertile in these antiquities."

The mounds are generally simple cones in form. Often they are truncated and sometimes terraced. They are also elliptical, pear shaped, or of a square pyramid form. The mounds are generally built of earth. However, stone mounds are often found. The enclosures, too, are generally made of earth and are of all shapes, although many of them are true parallelograms. They seem to have been mostly for defense. The areas within these enclosures vary from less than an acre to twenty or thirty acres. In selecting the sites for their mounds the Mound Builders chose high and prominent places. The mounds are often found where least expected—perhaps overlooking some waterfall. They are generally found along river terraces, which were advantageous from a military point of view, and also near water, fish, and the fertile land of the river valley. These mounds and enclosures are now not nearly so high as they have been in the past. The natural wear of the weather and cultivation during several generations have left them much lower than they were when they were first built.

Squier and Davis' "Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley," Volume I of *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge*

(1847), is one of the best authorities upon the subject of mounds and Mound Builders. They divide mounds (p. 140) into four classes: (1) Altar mounds or mounds containing altars, which vary in size from two feet square to fifty feet in length by twelve or fifteen feet in width. (2) Mounds of sepulture, which stand outside the enclosures in a position more or less distant from them. (3) Temple mounds, which have great regularity of form, are generally large, are pyramidal, truncated, and generally have graded avenues to their tops. (4) Anomalous (or miscellaneous) mounds, including mounds of observation. Mounds of observation are generally to be found in the most commanding places, and many of them contain human remains, undoubtedly those of Mound Builders.

Mounds and enclosures in Indiana are very numerous, although not so much so as in Ohio. If we take up, one by one, the counties that have earthworks of importance in them, we see that the number of mounds in the southern part of Indiana is much greater than in the northern. Nevertheless, mounds are found as far north as Laporte county. Mr. Foster (*Prehistoric Races of the United States*, p. 143) says that "about twelve miles from Laporte, on the banks of a small tributary of the Kankakee, there are not less than twenty in number, some of which have been explored by Dr. Higday with highly satisfactory results." At different times five skeletons and one skull have been taken from various mounds in this place, besides several copper hatchets, some earthen vessels, flint knives and what he calls "copper needles" or awls. These mounds are all different heights, the lowest that he mentions being about six feet high. He mentions one which was fifteen feet in height and another which he says was originally perhaps about twenty feet high (p. 143). Mr. Foster quotes the following from Dr. Higday: "A horizontal layer of ashes, about two inches thick in the middle and thinning out toward the circumference, was struck thirteen feet from the top. Three feet below the ashes we came upon a pipe, a copper needle, pieces of pottery and two adult skeletons, one of which was nearly entire, lying on what must have been a log of wood, but now so decayed that it could be readily pulverized by the hand" (p. 144).

Judge N. R. Overman describes the work of the Mound Builders in Howard and Tipton counties. Of Tipton county he says (*Prehistoric and Indian History of Howard and Tipton Counties*, p. 5): "From the Wabash they followed up the Wildcat to its headwaters in the northeast part of the county, and there established a colony and cultivated the soil. The southeast part of the county was still more densely populated. From their metropolis and ancient circle at Strawtown on the White river, they followed up Duck creek and formed a continuous line of settlements on its bank and through that portion of the county. There, a stone circle, several sacrificial mounds and burial mounds with highly polished implements, bear evidence of their ancient existence. Again, we find remains of that strange people in the southwest part of the county on the banks of Cicero creek." He also says (*Prehistoric and Indian History of Howard and Tipton Counties*, p. 17): "Howard county is no less fertile and probably more so than Tipton in prehistoric remains." Mr. Cox says (*Geological Report of Indiana for 1878*, p. 128): "There are a number of circular earthwork enclosures in Hamilton and Tipton counties. The principal works in Tipton county are close to Strawtown and in a cultivated field. The largest is a circle with an open gateway on one side. It has been so badly obliterated by the plow that I was unable to make a complete survey of it."

There are two accounts of the earthworks of Madison county, one of them by E. T. Cox (*E. T. Cox: Geological Survey of Indiana for 1878. Antiquities*, p. 129), published in 1878, the other by Francis A. Walker (*Francis A. Walker: Ancient Earthworks near Anderson, Indiana, Proceedings of the Indiana Academy of Science for 1892*, p. 51), published in 1892. The two accounts differ slightly as to the number of mounds and as to the measurements of them. This, however, may be accounted for by the great difference in the time of the two investigations. The works which are known throughout the adjoining country as "The Mounds" are about three miles from Anderson on the south bank of White river. They are situated on a bluff seventy-five feet in height in the highest position in the vicinity. The high location is an important fact, as the mound is one of defense. The system

consists of one large and six or seven smaller earthworks, the smaller ones lying south and west of the large one.

The principal work (see map, p. 131 of Geological Survey of Indiana for 1878) is a circular embankment with a ditch on the inside and a mound in the center of the enclosure. The gateway is 30 feet wide and opens to the south. The ditch terminates on each side of it, so that carriages may enter and drive around the mound. The work is a true circle, 384 feet in diameter by Cox's measurement (p. 129), or 360 feet, with an area of 2.35 acres, according to Walker (p. 51). The enclosed part within the ditch is about 140 feet in diameter, with an area of about a third of an acre. The ditch is 60 feet wide and is 10½ feet deep according to Mr. Cox, while Mr. Walker estimates its average depth at 6.92 feet. The embankment is, at its base, 50 or 60 feet wide and has an average height of 8 or 9 feet, with a variance of 3.3 feet. The mound in the center is 4 feet high and 30 feet in diameter.

Mr. Walker says (*Proceedings of the Indiana Academy of Science* for 1892, p. 53): "About ten years ago the writer and Dr. Joseph Tingley, then of Asbury University, made an excavation in the center of the mound in the main works. At a depth of four feet we found a bed of ashes, charcoal and burned bones, the bones crumbling on exposure to the atmosphere. Dr. Tingley claimed they were not human, but small animal bones. We found no stone or any arrangement of the earth in the form of an altar, and the fire seemed to have been there before the mound was built above it. The earth was baked and reddened by the action of the intense heat of the same. * * * We dug down about two feet below this stratum, but found no further evidence of fire or any unusual arrangement of the earth, nor any evidence that the same had been disturbed further than by the construction of the central area, which had been filled as before mentioned" (p. 53).

Of the other seven mounds besides this principal one, four are circular and three are of irregular shape (see map, p. 131 of Geological Survey of Indiana for 1878), one of which has two gateways. One has one gate and another has none visible.

"On the same section (Geological Survey of Indiana for 1878, p. 133) of land, but half a mile farther up the river and on the

same side of the stream, there is another cluster of earthworks that are of nearly equal interest. In fact, the principal work is in some respects more remarkable than the large circle above. The outline is irregular (see map on page 135 of Geological Survey of Indiana for 1878), constricted on one end and at the side; at the other end there is a gateway nine feet wide protected by two small mounds now about four feet high. The wall is thirty to thirty-five feet wide at the base and about four feet high. The ditch is eight feet wide."

In Randolph county, "besides a number of well-defined made mounds in the neighborhood of Lynn station, there are frequent examples of natural mounds. These are usually much larger than the artificial mounds. Some of these mounds of modified drifts have been utilized by ancient people as burial grounds." (Joseph Moore: "Concerning a Burial Mound Recently Opened in Randolph County," Proceedings of the Indiana Academy of Science for 1894, p. 46.) In one, about 150 yards in circumference, an aqueous deposit, many skeletons have been found. "Some of them were in a sitting posture with the chin crowded upon the knees. The skeletons were of both sexes and various ages, some quite young. There is quite a diversity in the shape of the skulls."

"The largest walled enclosure in the State (Geological Survey of Indiana for 1878, p. 134) is situated near the town of Winchester in Randolph county. It contains thirty-one acres. The whole thing is now in a fair way to be entirely obliterated. * * * There are two gateways (see p. 137 of Geological Survey of Indiana for 1878), one on the eastern end which is twelve feet wide and has no defenses, Sugar creek and the intervening bluff probably being deemed sufficient. At the west end there is an embankment in the shape of a half circle which overlaps the gate and complicates the passageway. The enclosure is in the shape of a parallelogram with curved angles. The sides are 1,320 feet long and the ends 1,080 feet. There is a mound in the center one hundred feet in diameter and nine feet high. * * * The location was selected with due regard to protection against sudden attack of an enemy. It is at the juncture of Sugar creek

and White river, which affords protection to two sides, and the mound in the center serves as a lookout station."

"Mounds occur in Fountain county near Covington and to the north of Attica; in fact, the whole valley of the Wabash must have been, in former times, the seat of a numerous population, forming, as it did, the great artery of communication between the Ohio river and the Lake region to the north." (Foster's Prehistoric Races, etc., p. 143.)

Mr. T. B. Redding is authority for the following statement as to Henry county (Prehistoric Earthworks of Henry County, Indiana, in the Proceedings of the Indiana Academy of Science, 1891): "There are twenty artificial mounds and fourteen enclosures within the limits of Henry county. There are also certain mounds or elevations that have much the appearance of artificial mounds, but of which I am not sure, numbering in all twelve to fourteen, and one uncertain enclosure. Of these the strong probability is that some are artificial. There is a circular enclosure in Henry township. Its diameter is 115 feet; the height of embankment, at the highest point from the bottom of the ditch, is about three feet. There is an open space or gateway on the east side about twelve feet wide. There is the appearance of a small mound inside of the enclosure toward the west side, about fifteen feet in diameter and eighteen to twenty-four inches high. I will say here that in all the enclosures in this county the ditches are on the inside of the enclosure."

A number of mounds are reported in Vigo and Vermillion counties. (Geological Survey of Indiana for 1878, p. 128.)

Mounds are abundant in Green, Owen and Morgan counties. In the latter they have furnished a great many interesting relics. Some mounds are said to have existed at one time in the city limits of Indianapolis, but they have given way to the changes required by the growth and development of the city. (Geological Survey of Indiana for 1878, p. 128.)

In Bartholomew county there are several mounds, and several skeletons have been found in them, especially in Wayne township. "A circular mound sixty feet in diameter and about three feet high, but by cultivation now almost level with the surface of the field, is situated in Wayne township. Some years ago it was

explored and five skeletons were found besides numerous stone implements. Many articles of stone, together with fragments of bones, have since been obtained." (J. J. Edwards: Mounds and Burial Grounds of Bartholomew County, Indiana, Proceedings of Academy of Science for 1901.)

There is an ancient fort on the hill, north of Hardentown in Dearborn county, Indiana. The wall is four feet high in places, and is partly constructed of loose stones and partly of earth. There are two gateways on the north end formed by an earth-work that is nearly circular. The hill is nearly two hundred feet high and commands an extensive view over the country around. On the ridge leading to the northeast and northwest there are eight mounds.

There are a large number of mounds in the vicinity of Aurora, and quite a large mound was within the city limits, but was long ago almost entirely removed by cutting a streetway through it. (Antiquities: Geological Survey of Indiana for 1878, p. 122.)

Mr. Foster quotes the following from Mr. John Collett's report of the Geological Survey of Sullivan County (Prehistoric Races, etc., p. 142): "Numerous earthworks are found in this region of such an extent as to require for their construction time and persistent labor of many people. Situated on the river bluffs, their location combines picturesque scenery, susceptibility for defense and convenience to transportation, water and productive lands. These are not requisites in the nomadic life of the red men, and identify the Mound Builders as a partly civilized agricultural people."

The principal earthworks of Sullivan county are on the east bank of the Wabash river at Merom. This enclosure has been called Fort Azatlan, and is one of the principal ones of Indiana. It is irregular, but on the whole may be called three-sided. (See map, p. 134, of Foster's Prehistoric Races.) "On the river side the bank * * * is very steep, and forms the western line of fortification, while deep ravines add to its strength on the other sides, the weak points being strengthened by earthworks. The general course of the work is from the north, where it is very narrow, not over fifty feet, owing to the formation of the plateau, south along the river bank * * * to its widest portion, which

is here about 375 feet east and west. * * * There is a continued line, in part natural and in part artificial, which if measured in all its ins and outs would not be far from 2,450 feet. * * *. This location is the one spot of the region, for several miles along the river, that would be selected to-day for the erection of a fortification in the vicinity, with the addition of the possession of a small eminence to the north." Inside the enclosure there are five mounds and forty-five depressions, all of which are circular except one, and that is oval. (Foster, p. 136.) After having dug into two of the depressions, Mr. Putnam decided that they had been large pits that had been filled up by "the accumulation of vegetable matter and soil that had been deposited by natural action alone." A trench was dug across one of them and "the former bottom was reached at a depth of about five feet. On this bottom ashes and burnt clay gave evidence of an ancient fire, and at a few feet on one side several pieces of pottery, a few bones of animals and one stone arrowhead were found. A spot had evidently been struck where food had been cooked and eaten. * * * The legitimate conclusion to be drawn from the facts is that these pits were the houses of the inhabitants or defenders of the fort, who were probably further protected from the elements and arrows of assailants by a roof of logs and bark or boughs. The position of all the mounds within the enclosure * * * is such as to suggest that they were used as observatories, and it may be questioned if the human and other remains found in them were placed there by the occupants of the fort, or are to be considered under the head of intrusive burials by a later race."

In Knox county, near Vincennes, there are several mounds of unusual size. (Geological Survey of Indiana for 1878, p. 127.) Mr. Foster says (Foster's Prehistoric Races, etc., p. 132): "In 1859, according to Mr. William Pidgeon, it became necessary to remove a mound * * * in the suburbs of the city. It was about sixteen feet in height, with a diameter of sixty-six feet and a section of it exhibited five distinct strata. The first or lowest consisted of a bed of human bones arranged in a circle eighteen feet in diameter, closely pressed together. Around the outer edge of this circle the stratum was thinner than in the center. Skulls, tibia, ribs and vertebrae were promiscuously mingled as

though a pile of bodies had been heaped up. * * * Mr. Pidgeon was disposed to regard this as a 'battleground'."

In Ohio county J. B. Gerard, M. D., in connection with others, opened a mound near the mouth of Laughery creek which was about one hundred feet in diameter and fifteen feet high; excavations were made at several places, and they found human bones, one whole earthen pot and a great many fragments of pottery. "Dr. Gerard has noticed from twenty to thirty mounds along the bluffs of Laughery creek and has opened a number of them, but found nothing of note except ashes, which lay at the base of them all." (Antiquities: Geological Survey of Indiana for 1878, p. 122.)

The great work of the Mound Builders in Clark county is called the "Stone Fort." Mr. Cox says: "At the mouth of Fourteen Mile creek and about three miles from Charlestown, the county seat of Clark county, there is one of the most remarkable stone fortifications which has ever come under my notice. * * * The locality selected for this fort presents many natural advantages for making it impregnable to the opposing forces of prehistoric times. It occupies the point of an elevated narrow ridge which faces the Ohio river on the east and is bordered by Fourteen Mile creek on the west side. * * * Along the greater part of the Ohio river front there is an abrupt escarpment of rock entirely too steep to be scaled, and a similar natural barrier exists along a portion of the northwest side of the ridge facing the creek. * * * Although the locality afforded many natural advantages for a fort or stronghold, one is compelled to admit that much skill was displayed and labor expended in rendering its defense as perfect as possible at all points. Stone axes, pestles, arrowheads, spear points, totums, charms and flint flakes have been found in great abundance in plowing the field at the foot of the old fort." (Geological Survey of Indiana for 1873, p. 125.)

In Vanderburgh county there is an enclosure of considerable size described by Mr. A. H. Purdue. "In the southeast corner of Vanderburgh county is a collection of mounds and earthworks. They are locally known as the 'Angel Mounds.' The remains lie between two bayous, one on the south side and one on the north. When in perfect condition there was probably an enclosure,

formed by the bank of the bayou on the south and an irregularly curved wall, presumably a rampart, either end of which was terminated by the embankment. At the present (1896) there are about 1,400 yards of this wall remaining. At intervals, usually of thirty-seven to forty yards, there are semi-circular mounds with radii of from eight to ten feet joined to the outer side of the wall. On the supposition that the wall was a rampart, these semi-circular projections from it were probably lookouts. The most striking object is the large mound. Its longest diameter is 500 feet. The width varies from 175 to 225 feet. With reference to altitude, it is divided into three parts. The third part is a dome, the highest point of which is thirty-nine feet above the ground on which the mound rests. If the trees along the Ohio river were removed, the top of this dome would afford a commanding view for several miles up and down the river. There are six other mounds within the enclosure. These are circular at the base and have rounded tops, with the exception of one, which is a truncated cone 160 feet in diameter. It is used by the neighborhood for a burying ground. Pieces of pottery such as is now made by the western Indians are common within the enclosure."

(A. H. Purdue: Some Mounds of Vanderburgh County, Proceedings of Indiana Academy of Science for 1896.)

"Going down the Ohio river to the mouth of the Wabash, there are a great number of mounds and earthworks of small magnitude. * * * Mounds are particularly numerous in the vicinity of New Harmony, Posey county, sixty miles above the mouth of the Wabash. The town itself occupies the site of an immense group of mounds." (Geological Survey of Indiana for 1878, p. 126.)